A

SERMON

Preach'd to the

SOCIETY

FOR

Reformation of Manners,

In *Kingſton* upon *Hull*;

On *Wedneſday*, *January* the 10th. $1\frac{699}{700}$.

By *JOHN BILLINGSLEY*,
Miniſter of the Goſpel.

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Mr. *BILLINGSLEY's*

SERMON

FOR

Reformation of Manners.

THE

Epiſtle Dedicatory,

TO

The Worthy Members of the SOCIETY for *Reformation of Manners*, in *Kingſton* upon *Hull.*

Honoured Sirs,

THAT *I make bold to Entitle* You *to the Patronage of the following Plain Diſcourſe, I think needs no other* Apology, *but to mention, That it was* firſt Preached, *and is* now made Publick, *at Your* Requeſt.

You have undertaken a Difficult Work, *and (thorough the Goodneſs of God) made ſome* Conſiderable Advances *in it, in Circumſtances that were enough to have Diſheartned a* Piety *and* Courage *leſs*

than Yours. *And I hope you* have found, *and, by the Bleſſing of Heaven upon Your Honeſt Endeavours,* will find, *that the farther You go on in this Service, the more your* Difficulties *will* abate, *and the more Your* Encouragements *(thoſe eſpecially of the* Beſt ſort) *will* increaſe.

I have endeavoured to lay before You Plain Scripture-Rules *for Your Management of this* Weighty Buſineſs, *and to repreſent to You the manifold Obligations You lie under to Perſevere in it. I hope I have herein ſpoken nothing but Words of* Truth *and* Soberneſs, *even* ſuch Truths *as all* Wiſe *and* Good *Men, of the moſt* differing Parties (*Alas! that we cannot avoid ſtill uſing the unhappy word* Party !) *are agreed in.*

And if any will call this Canting, *they ſhall (for me) enjoy the* ſole Privilege *of adhering to their own, beloved, and long-accuſtomed* Dialect: *For when Men are fallen out with* God *and their own* Conſciences, *with* Reaſon, Authority, *and* Sobriety, *it is no Wonder if the* Light of Scripture-Truth, *any thing warmly applied, ſet them a* raving. *The worſt I wiſh ſuch, is, That they may* awake *and*

come

come to themſelves *in time*; *elſe they will e're long* know (*what they will not now* conſider) *that* it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, *Heb.* 10. 31.

It was, I confeſs, ſome Diſcouragement to me in both Parts *of this Undertaking*, (*but eſpecially* the latter) *that I was to manage this* Weighty Argument *after ſo* many, *of* every way greater *Abilities, and who had, in a ſort,* exhauſted *the Subject. Yet ſince I could not, without being* rude *to* You, *and* unfriendly *to the* Truly-good Cauſe *You are engaged in, decline it; I ſhall leave the Judgment of this* Confeſſedly-mean *Performance, to the* Pious *and* Candid *Readers, without being concerned at the Scoffs of* Debauched *and* Profane *Perſons, with whom, the Apoſtle St.* Peter *hath foretold us, theſe laſt Days ſhould abound,* 2 Pet. 3. 3.

That the following Sermon may be bleſſed of God, for the ſtrengthening of Your Hands in the preſent Eminent *Service You are imployed in; That You may,* all of You, *approve Your* Hearts *unto* God, *and Your Actions to the* Conſciences of Men;

The Epiſtle Dedicatory.

That all Mountains *may become a* Plain *before You*; *That the* preſent Inhabitants *of this Place, and even* late Poſterity, *may reap the* Happy Fruits *of Your* Good Endeavours; *That we may be as Eminent for* Real Holineſs *and* Brotherly-Love *as we have long been for the* Remarkable Care *of a* Gracious Providence *about us*, is, *and ſhall be, the Earneſt Prayer of*,

Gentlemen,

Your very Affectionate, Obliged, Faithful Servant,

John Billingſley.

JUDE 22, 23.

And of ſome have compaſſion, making a difference:

And others ſave with fear, pulling them out of the fire: hating even the garment ſpotted by the fleſh.

THESE Words I have choſen to ſpeak to at this time, as containing a *Compleat Directory* for ſuch, as either by the *ſpecial Obligations* of a *ſeperate Function*, or the more *Common Bonds* of *Humanity* or *Chriſtian Charity*, are concerned for the putting a Stop to the Growth of *Error*, or any *Impiety* in any *Church*, *City*, or *Nation*.

I ſhall not detain you with any Account of the Apoſtle St. *Jude*, by whoſe Miniſtry this Epiſtle was written, in *Compli-*

Compliance with or *Conformity to* the *Dictates* and *Inſpiration* of the HolyGhoſt; neither will I ſo far treſpaſs upon the narrow Limits of Time allotted to this Exerciſe, as to give you the *Analyſis* of this Epiſtle: You may be furniſhed, *as to Both*, by conſulting *Perkins*, *Manton*, *Jenkins*, *Roberts*, *Clark*, &c.

I ſhall only hint, That the *Principal Scope* of the Epiſtle ſeems to be the Confirming thoſe who were newly converted to Chriſtianity, againſt the *Errors* and *Impieties* that had, *even ſo early*, begun to creep into the Church: Whether ſpecially thoſe of the *Gnoſticks*, or *any other*, I determine not.

The Words of the *Text* ſuggeſt to us a *Threefold Rule* for our Behaviour, with reſpect to thoſe whoſe Miſcarriages are *grievous* to us, and whoſe *Reformation* we deſire, and *in Purſuance of ſuch Deſire* do endeavour. Here is (1.) The Rule of *Compaſſion*. (2.) The Rule of *Severity*, animated by an *unaffected Zeal*. (3.) The Rule of *Caution*.

I. The

I. The Rule of *Compaſſion: Of ſome have Compaſſion, making a difference.* I know the *Vulgar Latin* reads otherwiſe; and *Beza* tells us, *that Reading* is ſupported by the Authority of Three Ancient Copies: But I do not think this needs give us any Stop, ſince they that are capable to compare both, will eaſily ſee that the Reading which *our Verſion* follows ought to be preferr'd; and to *others*, a nicer canvaſſing the Point would be but a *needleſs*, becauſe *uſeleſs*, Amuſement.

The Apoſtle here teacheth us, in dealing with Offenders to *act judiciouſly*; to found all our Proceedings upon a right Diſcernment both of *Perſons* and *Actions*. Partial *accepting of Perſons* is a Fault, but due *Diſcrimination of Perſons* is our Duty; that we may know how to behave towards every one, as the Caſe requires.

Some offend *ignorantly*, and their Ignorance is rather owing to their *unhappy Circumſtances* than to *Sloth or Affectation*; *others* are *wilfully ignorant*, and *others ſin againſt Light.*

Now

Now in the *former* of theſe Caſes, which this Rule reſpects, *Lenity*, *Pity*, *Tenderneſs*, *Compaſſion*, are required; as moſt likely to gain upon ſuch *Perſons*, and *to ſet them right*: *Harſhneſs* diſcourageth them, *Kindneſs* winneth them. Beſides, their Caſe is *truly Compaſſionable*; had they *known* better, they had *done* better; and had *their* Opportunities of Knowledge equalled *ours*, probably they had out-ſtript *us*, both in *Knowledge* and *Good Life*.

We ought therefore to *pity* and *pray* for ſuch, and by no means to carry *haughtily*, much leſs *cruelly* towards them. 'Tis the Commendation of our great High-Prieſt, that he *can have Compaſſion on the Ignorant, and on them that are out of the way*, Heb. 2. 5.

II. The Rule of *Severity*, animated by unaffected *Zeal*: *Others ſave with fear, pulling them out of the fire.*

Others,] *i. e.* Such as ſin *knowingly*, *wilfully*, *obſtinately*.

Save,] We muſt not deſpair of the Salvation even of ſuch, but do what in

in us lieth to recover them out of the Snare of the Devil, 2 *Tim.* 2. 26.

Save.] This only God and Chriſt can do *principally* and *efficiently*; yet 'tis not ordinarily done without our *Concurrence*: Men are *Inſtruments* in this bleſſed Work, tho' God only be the *Author* of it. So the Apoſtle exhorts his Hearers to *ſave themſelves from that untoward Generation*, Acts 2. 40. and St. *Paul* tells *Timothy*, that *in ſo doing he ſhould ſave himſelf, and thoſe that heard him*, 1 Tim. 4. 16. The *Salvation* here ſpoken of, is from *Sin*, the Cauſe; and *Judgments* here, and *Damnation* hereafter, the *diſmal Conſequents* of it. What ſhould not any of us be willing to *do* or *ſuffer*, to promote ſo bleſſed a Work?

With Fear,] *i. e.* Either *with Fear, leſt we miſcarry in our Undertaking*, and ſo with Prudence, Caution, and Circumſpection: So the Apoſtle exhorts us *to work out our ſalvation with fear and trembling*, Phil. 2. 12. Where the *Conſequence* is ſo important, the *Care* cannot be too much. Or,

With Fear,] *i. e. By means of Fear:* Labouring to ſtir up in the Sinners we would

would reclaim, an Holy Fear of the *Divine Majeſty*, and of his moſt *terrible*, and no leſs *righteous Judgements*, both in *this Life*, and that which is *to come*. Thus the Apoſtle ſpeaks, 2 *Cor.* 5. 11. *Knowing the terror of the Lord, we perſwade men.*

Hardened Sinners are not ordinarily to be dealt with by *Arguments of Love*, but of *Fear:* They muſt have Hell-fire flaſh'd in their Faces; they muſt be dealt *plainly* and *roundly* with; a *mild Reproof* doth but *harden* them: The *Tenders of Mercy* (too often) *embolden* them in Sin. They muſt be made to know that God is a *Juſt* and a *Holy* God; and that *he hath ordained Tophet of old, he hath made it deep and large; the pile thereof of fire and much wood: the breath of the Lord (like a ſtream of brimſtone) doth kindle it*, Iſa. 30. 33.

Impenitent Sinners muſt be acquainted, that the *Puniſhments* that await them are *inſupportable* and *eternal*; that *God is a conſuming fire*, Heb. 12. 29.

And if any of them be ſo hardened, as through *Infidelity* or *Inconſideration*, to ſlight and diſregard all this, they muſt

muſt be made to feel the *preſent Smart* of their Sin and Folly, by the *ſtrict Execution* of *juſt Laws* againſt their Impieties and Impurities; that a Stop may be put to the *growing Contagion* of their pernicious Examples, and they themſelves may be awakened to *remember and ſhew themſelves Men*, (*Iſa.* 46. 8.) till they ſee what *Beaſts* they have hitherto made themſelves.

Pulling them out of the fire.] This Expreſſion notes *the Zeal* with which we muſt endeavour *the reforming of heinous Offenders.* They are like Children, or Epileptick or Frantick Perſons, fallen into the Fire, that *cannot*, or *will not* help themſelves: 'Tis a *barbarous thing* to let them lie there, and not lend them an hand for their Reſcue. And here we are taught, that our Endeavours of this kind muſt be *ſpeedy*, leſt our help come *too late*; we muſt be *active* and *induſtrious*, that our help may be *effectual*; and all our Endeavours muſt proceed from *Love*, as prompted by a Deſire to ſave the *Life*, the *Soul* of our *offending* and *endangered* Brother.

III. We

III. We have here, The Rule of *Caution : Hating even the Garment ſpotted by the Fleſh.* We muſt ſo deal with others, *for their Good*, as to take heed we our ſelves receive *no hurt* from them; at leaſt not of *that kind* we would ſave them from. A Phyſician will not viſit a *Peſt-houſe* without fortifying his Spirits by ſome proper and ſufficient *Antidote* before-hand.

We muſt labour ſo to converſe with *Bad Men*, for their *Good*, as to ſee that we our ſelves become not *Bad* thereby.

We muſt therefore ſtir up in *our Souls* a *ſettled Hatred* of all *that Sin* which we would diſſuade *others* from; and not only ſo, but of all the *Appearances* of it; and likewiſe of all that may be an *Occaſion*, *Allurement*, or *Inducement* to it.

This I take to be, in ſhort, the meaning of the Expreſſion the Apoſtle here makes uſe of, *viz. Hating even the garment ſpotted by the fleſh.*

Waving therefore many other Particulars which might be fitly gathered from the Words, we ſhall ſumm up their

their main Scope and Import, *eſpecially with reſpect to the preſent Occaſion*, in the following Propoſition or Point of Doctrine, *viz.*

> *That it is the Duty of every Chriſtian, ſo to endeavour the ſaving of Others from Error and Impiety, and the dreadful Conſequences of both, as to ſee that himſelf be not intangled in either.*

In ſpeaking to which *Propoſition*, I ſhall, with what *Plainneſs* and *Brevity* I can, treat on theſe Three Heads following, *viz.*

I. *Of the Duty to be performed.*
II. *Of the Manner of its Performance.*
III. *Of the Obligations we are under to ſuch Performance.*

I. Let us enquire concerning *the Duty to be performed.* Now, in order to the *right ſtating this Duty, Of endeavouring to ſave Others from Error and Impiety, and the Deſtruction conſequent thereupon,*

let me deſire your *attentive Conſideration* of the following Particulars:

1. *Error in the Fundamentals of Religion and Impiety, or Looſneſs of Converſation, do certainly expoſe thoſe who live and die in them to utter Deſtruction.* The Apoſtle aſſures us, *Rom.* 6. 23. that *the wages of ſin is death.* And *Heb.* 12. 14. that *without holineſs no man ſhall ſee the Lord.* See alſo *Eph.* 5. 3, 4, 5, 6. *But fornication, and all uncleanneſs, or covetouſneſs, let it not be once named among you, as becometh Saints: Neither filthineſs, nor fooliſh talking, nor jeſting, which are not convenient; but rather giving of thanks. For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean perſon, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Chriſt, and of God. Let no man deceive you with vain words; for becauſe of theſe things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of diſobedience.* Phil. 3. 19. *They whoſe God is their belly, whoſe glory is their ſhame, who mind earthly things; their end is deſtruction.* 1 Cor. 6. 9, 10. *Know ye not that the unrighteous ſhall not inherit*

inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor effeminate, nor abuſers of themſelves with mankind: Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, ſhall inherit the kingdom of God. Rom. 1. 18. *The wrath of God is revealed from heaven againſt all ungodlineſs and unrighteouſneſs of men, who hold the truth in unrighteouſneſs.*

There is nothing plainer in the Word of God, than that a *lewd and vicious Life*, impenitently perſiſted in, will certainly iſſue in the *utter Deſtruction* both of *Soul* and *Body*. They that live like *Beaſts* on Earth, muſt certainly be the Companions of *Devils* in Hell. The *Burnings of Luſt* here, prepare for the *unquenchable Burnings of Hell* hereafter. There are few will ſeem to doubt of it, though few live as if they believed *any thing* of it.

But that Errors in the Fundamentals of Religion are *of like Fatal Influence*, will hardly be admitted by many: Yet the Apoſtle *Paul* reckons *Hereſies* among the *Works of the Fleſh*, Gal. 5. 20 and aſſures us the *Word* of ſuch *eateth as a*

Canker, 2 Tim. 2. 17. and bids us *beware of ſuch*, as we love our Souls, *Tit.* 3. 10. 'Tis little conſidered by many, that a *ſound Faith* is as neceſſary to Salvation as a *good Life*; nay, *theſe two* are indeed *inſeparable*. If *the Plague of Leproſie be in the Head*, the *whole Perſon* is thereby rendred *unclean*, Lev. 13. 44. He is in danger of periſhing *himſelf*, and his Society becomes infectious. " I know this Matter hath been " carried *too far* by *ſome* who have *raſhly* " *hæreticated* their Brethren, " and boldly uſurped the Title of *Orthodox* to *themſelves*, and (*not knowing what Spirit* " *they are of*) would *caſt out of the* " *Church*, and (if it were in their Power) out of *Heaven* too, all that cannot *glibly pronounce* their *Shibboleth*.

See the *Poſtſcript.*

Yet if *ſome* reel into *one Extreme*, it doth not follow that therefore *we* muſt reel into the other. We are to *contend earneſtly for the Faith once delivered to the Saints*, Jude 3. And the Corrupters of *that Faith* are to be looked upon as the moſt *dangerous Enemies* Religion hath. Such as deny the *Divine Authority*

rity of the Scripture, as the *Deiſts*; ſuch as *interpret away* its vital Senſe and Meaning, as the *Socinians*; ſuch as ſubject it to a *private Interpretation*, allowing no *gloſs* but what *their own Infallibility* ſtamps upon it, as the *Romaniſts* abroad, and our modern *Enthuſiaſts* at home: *All theſe* lay *dangerous Snares* for the Souls of *ignorant* and *unſtable Men*. If our *Faith* be *blind*, our *Practice* will be *lame*; and both *the one* and *the other* of theſe, will ſadly find at laſt that they have but *deceived* themſelves, or been deceived by others, *with vain words*, Eph. 5. 6.

2. *Yet while we are in the preſent probationary State, there is hope that thoſe who are involved in theſe Snares of Death may be reſcued from them.* The great Shepherd and Biſhop of Souls came *to ſeek and to ſave that which was loſt*, Luk. 19. 10. And the *great Deſign* of the Goſpel is to publiſh *Pardon* and *Life* to the Penitent, *without Exception*. *Jeſus Chriſt* (the Apoſtle acquaints us) *came into the world to ſave ſinners*, not excluding *the very chief*, 1 Tim. 1. 15. And

it is often ſeen, that *Publicans and Harlots* enter in before *proud Phariſees* and *confident Self-juſtitiaries*, Matth. 21. 31.

Where the Goſpel is *duly* preached, it is *glad tidings of great joy to all people*, Luke 2. 10. 'Tis a *black Catalogue* to which the Apoſtle ſubjoins, *ſuch were ſome of you*, 1 Cor. 6. 11.

They who, as to their external Converſation, have been *moſt blameleſs* (tho' that be commendable) are not to be *flattered*, as if *they needed no Repentance*, or might get to Heaven without *Regeneration*, and *Faith* in the Death and Satisfaction of *Jeſus Chriſt*; nor are the moſt *guilty* and *abominable* to be treated as if there were *no hope* for *them* upon true Repentance and Faith in the Redeemer. There is certainly a great deal of Truth in that Aſſertion of ſundry of our old *Engliſh* Divines, *viz. That all Men naturally have a ſtrong Inclination to a Covenant of Works, and would be as little beholden to the Redeemer and his Grace as ever they can.*

True it is, *Great Tranſgreſſions* call for *deep Humiliation:* Yet we muſt take heed we think not of *waſhing away our Guilt*

Guilt in our own Tears; 'tis only the *Redeemer's Blood* can do that: And by virtue of *that Blood*, together with the *ſanctifying Influence* of the Divine Spirit, purchaſed by it, and diſpenced by our *aſcended Redeemer*, there *is hope* that the *vileſt Sinners* may become firſt *juſtified* and then *glorified Saints*.

3. *There are Means appointed by God (and uſually attended with his Bleſſing) for the ſaving of Sinners from the Guilt, Defilement, and Dominion of Sin, and from the Temporal and Eternal Judgments due to it.*

God hath declared upon *Oath*, That he *hath no pleaſure in the death of him that dieth*, Ezek. 18. 32. and *ch.* 33. 11. And the *long Exerciſe* of his *Patience* towards *guilty Sinners*, may *abundantly aſſure* us of it; *much more*, when we conſider *the Gifts that our riſen and aſcended Lord hath given to men*, (Eph. 4. 8.) the *Ordinances* he hath ſettled in his *Church*; the *Charge* he hath entruſted *every Man* with, not only of his *own*, but likewiſe of his *Brother's* Soul: So that the Preaching of the *Word*, the Adminiſtra-

tion of *Sacraments*, the Wiſe and Spiritual Management of *Diſcipline*, Fraternal *Correption*, the Shining Light of a Good *Example*, Providential *Chaſtiſements*, are all ſo many *proper Helps* to reduce Sinners from *the Error of their Ways*, and prevent that *Ruine* which will elſe *certainly* and *ſpeedily* overtake them.

4. *It is the unqueſtionable Duty of Chriſtian Magiſtrates (and that by virtue of their Office) to puniſh Vice and Profaneneſs. The Magiſtrate is a Miniſter of God to us for Good; a Revenger to execute wrath upon him that doth evil, and one who beareth not the Sword in vain*, Rom. 13. 4.

Whether, or how far *Errors* (even the *moſt dangerous*) are *puniſhable* or *reſtrainable* by the Magiſtrate's Sword, is a Queſtion that hath been *boldly ventilated*; but whether *accurately decided* or no, of late, I ſhall not determine: But that the *puniſhing of Vice and Profaneneſs is his Duty*, is what no body *doth* or *can* diſpute.

All

All the Difficulty is, to get Men to the Diſcharge of a *Plain and Neceſſary Duty*, to the Performance of which they are under all the *Obligations* of *Loyalty* both to their *Heavenly* and *Earthly King*; of *Conſcience* to their Solemn *Oaths*; of *Intereſt* (if the Peace of their Conſciences, and their good Reputation among Men, be looked upon by them as any part of their Intereſt.) But while the gratifying of a *Friend*, or (which is worſe) a *deadly Enemy*, a *baſe Luſt*, is of more *value* with them (as *with ſome* it *moſt evidently* is) than *all* the above-mentioned *Obligations*, there is but *too much* Cauſe to fear that the *ſo neceſſary*, *ſo much deſired*, and *ſo hopefully-begun* Work of *Reformation of Manners* will die in *their hands*. And then what *Outcries* their *Conſciences* and their *Poſterity* will e're long make againſt *them*, I leave *them* to think: I pray God they may in time.

5. *It is alſo the Duty of Miniſters, by ſound Doctrine, by ſerious Exhortation, and by the ſhining Light of an Exemplary Behaviour, to give all the Check they*

can

can to growing Error and Impiety. This is their *Office-Work*, to which they are *ſpecially to attend*, as *called* and *conſecrated* thereunto. They are, in a peculiar manner, *the ſalt of the earth, and the light of the world*, Matth. 5. 13, 14. They are ſent on this very Errand, *To turn men from darkneſs to light, and from the power of Satan unto God*, Acts 26. 18. It ought to be their *whole Buſineſs to ſave themſelves and thoſe that hear them*, 1 Tim. 4. 16. The Epiſtles to *Timothy* and *Titus* do thoroughly acquaint them with the Weight of their *Work*, *Obligations*, and *Account*: On the heedful Reading whereof, where is he to be found, that may not juſtly cry out, with the bleſſed Apoſtle St. *Paul*, *Who is ſufficient for theſe things?* 2 Cor. 2. 16. And if it be difficult, faithfully to acquit our ſelves of *ſo great a Truſt*, in *any times*, how *much more* muſt it be ſo in Times of *ſo great Degeneracy* as theſe *laſt* and *worſt* of Days, the *Ends of the World*, the very *Dreggs* of Time, wherein not only our *Perſons*, but our very *Office* is deſpiſed, and we are *accounted* and *uſed* (as our Betters once were)

were) as the very *filth and off-ſcouring of all things*, 1 Cor. 4. 13. *Deiſts* and *Socinians* on the one hand, and *giddy Enthuſiaſts* on the other, having uſed all the Arts of *ſubtile Malice* to render *Miniſters* and the *Miniſtry baſe* and *contemptible*; and to get us look'd upon by *all whom they can influence*, as a pack of *Chargeable Cheats*, *uſeleſs*, nay, *Pernicious Impoſtors*. Theſe are *Diſcouragements* which ſome former Ages were, in a great meaſure, unacquainted with: Yet will not *all this*, nor a great deal *more*, excuſe *us* from doing *what we can*; no more than our *Perſonal Weakneſſes* will excuſe *others* for hindring us, by their *Oppoſitions* or *Underminings*, from doing *what elſe we might*.

We are liſted as *Captains in Chriſt's Army*, and we muſt *endure Hardſhips, as good Soldiers of Jeſus Chriſt*, 2 Tim. 2, 3.

We muſt labour to be *excited by Difficulties*, and *emboldened by Oppoſition*, and, *not fearing the Faces of Men*, to *ſhew them their Tranſgreſſions and their Sins*, Iſa. 58. 1. *To warn Sinners, that they die not*, Ezek. 33. 7, 1. *To reprove, rebuke,*

rebuke, exhort, with all long-ſuffering and doctrine, 2 Tim. 4. 2. And then, whatever our *preſent Entertainment* or *Succeſs* be, we ſhall *at laſt* be accepted and rewarded.

6. *Yet is not this Work ſo peculiar to Magiſtrates and Miniſters, but that all who profeſs themſelves Chriſtians are likewiſe obliged, according to their Abilities and Opportunities, to endeavour the Promotion and Furtherance of it.*

Magiſtracy and Miniſtry are *diſtinct Offices*, peculiarly appropriated to the *great Ends* of *Reſtraining* Wickedneſs, and *Furthering* and *Countenancing* Sobriety, Righteouſneſs, and Godlineſs in the World: And the reſpective *Offices*, with the *proper Work* of them, are by no means to be invaded by *unqualified* or *uncalled Perſons*, for *God is a God of order, and not of confuſion, in all the Churches*, 1 Cor. 14. 33. Yet this hinders not, but that Private Perſons *may*, and *ought*, in their reſpective Places, to make the Work of the *one* and the *other* as eaſie as they can. And were but what in this kind *might* and

ought

ought to be done, faithfully performed by Perſons in *Private Stations*, the Work of *Publick Perſons* would be rendred *much eaſier to them.*

How *impoſſible* is it for *Magiſtrates* to *execute Laws* on obſtinate Offenders, if no body will bring them *Informations?* How heavily muſt the Work of *Miniſters* proceed, if *Parents* neglect the due *Inſtruction* and *Government* of their *Children* and *Families?* How many *Publick Miſcarriages* might be prevented, and the *Trouble* of *Magiſtrates* and *Miniſters* therein, would but *Chriſtian Neighbours prudently* watch over, and *faithfully admoniſh* one another? according to that *Apoſtolical Injunction*; *Exhort one another daily, while it is called to day, leſt any of you be hardened through the deceitfulneſs of ſin*, Heb. 3. 13.

But if *Private Perſons* throw all their *Duty* upon *Publick Officers*, were they Angels, a great deal of it is like to be left *undone.* Conſider ſeriouſly that *pregnant* and *often-mentioned*, but *too little regarded* Text, Lev. 19. 17. *Thou ſhalt not hate thy Brother in thy heart; thou ſhalt*

ſhalt in any wiſe reprove thy Brother, and not ſuffer ſin upon him. We muſt *admoniſh* one another, *reprove* one another, and, *if need be*, *inform* of one another; (ſee *Lev.* 5. 1.) unleſs we have a mind to be guilty of each others *Blood*, and draw down *Vengeance* on the *Nation*, and *Damnation* on our own *heads*: He is not duly concerned *for himſelf*, that is concerned *for no body but himſelf.*

7. *The greater Advances Error and Impiety have made in any Part of the Viſible Church, the more ſtrongly are all good Men engaged to appear with the utmoſt Vigour againſt them.*

If never ſo ſmall a Leak ſpring in a Ship, it's *every one's* Concern to do *their utmoſt* to ſtop it betimes; but if the Veſſel *fill with Water*, and threaten to ſink, each Man *pumps for his Life*, and puts to *all his Strength*. The *leaſt Deſenſions* of Piety in a Nation that hath long enjoyed the Goſpel, are of *threatning Aſpect*; but when Wickedneſs *comes in like a Flood*, and the *impetuous Torrent* threatens to bear down all be-

fore

fore it, 'tis then of higheſt Concernment, that *all, in whom there is left any Senſe of God and Goodneſs*, ſhould unite *as one Man*, and apply all their *Skill and Force* for the taking *timely* and *effectual Methods*, in order to the preventing that *utter Ruine* that will elſe certainly overtake an *impious* and *impenitent* People. *Righteouſneſs exalteth a nation; but ſin is a reproach* [and Ruine] *of any people*, Prov. 14. 34. And if ſo, what's like to become of *England?* There needs little of a *Spirit of Prophecy* to pronounce its Doom, unleſs the *late*, and *yet continued* Attempts for Reformation, meet with an *happier Effect* than the Managements of *too many* among us ſeem to preſage. I dare not ſay *our Wound is incurable*; I would fain hope otherwiſe: But if the moſt *proper Remedies* do but *exaſperate*, I leave it to the *Abler Phyſicians* of Church and State to *judge* of *ſo unpromiſing a Criſis*.

In a word, *Groſs Ignorance, damnable Hereſies, daring Blaſphemies, vile Hypocriſie, ſcandalous Diviſions, horrible Oppreſſion, baſe Selfiſhneſs, inſufferable*

able Pride, and incorrigible Obſtinacy, I think, hardly ever more prevail'd in a Land profeſſing the Goſpel, than they do in England *at this Day.* So that we may well ſay, in the Words of the Prophet, *Iſa.* 1. 9. *Except the Lord of hoſts had left unto us a very ſmall remnant, we ſhould have been as Sodom, and we ſhould have been like unto Gomorrah.* And what can *ſuch a State of things* beſpeak, of that *very ſmall remnant,* but that they endeavour ſpeedily *to ſtand in the breach, to turn away divine wrath?* Pſal. 106. 23. That they be *cloathed with Zeal* for *the Honour of God,* and *the real Reformation* of a ſinful People: And who knows but the *Prayers* and *Endeavours* of *the few,* may prevail againſt the *Impieties* and *Blaſphemies* of *the many* of thoſe *hardened* and *obſtinate* Sinners among us, that yet *hate Inſtruction, and refuſe to be Reformed?*

II. Let us next Inquire, *How this Duty of Endeavouring to ſave others from Sin and Ruine is to be performed?*

I have

I have been ſo *large* on the former Inquiry, that I muſt be the *briefer* in this and that which follows.

The Text, *as we have opened it*, furniſheth us with a full Anſwer; give me leave, as ſuccinctly as may be, to ſet before you the Particulars of it.

Endeavours for the Reforming of Others, are to be managed,

1. *With Judgment and Diſcretion; making a difference*, of *Perſons*, of *Crimes*. We are not to be *partial* to the *Perſons* of any; but we are to be *prudent* in our Applications to Perſons of different *Ranks*, *Capacities*, and *Qualifications*. See how the Apoſtle directs in relation hereto, 1 *Tim.* 5. 1, 2. *Rebuke not an elder, but intreat him as a father; and the younger men as brethren: the elder women as mothers, the younger as ſiſters: with all purity.*

Reproofs are *Arrows* that muſt not be ſhot *at Revers*. It muſt be conſidered not only what every one *needs*, but what he *can bear*, and what he is like to make a *right uſe* of; yea, and what may be the *Conſequence* of the Treat-

ment we give him, *with reſpect to others.*

Perſons in Publick Stations are not to be *made vile*, (unleſs they have firſt, in an *extraordinary manner*, made themſelves ſo,) leſt the *Office* fall with the *Perſon*, and the *Ignominy* of the *one* iſſue in the *Detriment* of the *other.*

So likewiſe as to *Faults*, we muſt take heed that we uſe not the ſame *ſharpneſs* of *Rebuke*, or *ſeverity* of *Proſecution*, on account of *ſmaller Infirmities*, or *ſudden Surprizes*, or *ſingle Inſtances* of Tranſgreſſion, as in *ſtudied* and *deliberate*, or *malicious* and *habitual* Wickedneſs. A *wiſe Phyſician* ſuits the Remedy to the *Strength of the Patient*, and the *Nature of the Diſeaſe:* So ſhould we endeavour to do.

2. *With Compaſſion:* In *ſmaller*, *more unwilling*, or *rare Offences*, much *Tenderneſs*, *Pity*, and *Gentleneſs* is to be uſed; and even where our Brother's Offence is *more heinous*, we are ſtill to mix *Pity* with our *greateſt* and moſt *juſt Severity*; as conſidering the *Frailty of Human Nature*, the *Malice* and *Subtilty* of

of the *Tempter*, *conſidering our ſelves, leſt we alſo be tempted*, Gal. 6. 1. He hath little Senſe of his *own Frailty* that inſults over *another's Folly*. 'Tis true, this muſt not hinder us from *puniſhing*, or *bringing to Puniſhment*, *obſtinate Offenders*; but yet it muſt make us *humble* and *mournful*, and *tender* in the Frame of our Spirits, when we are forced upon ſuch *unpleaſing Work*. Even God himſelf ſtiles *Judgment his ſtrange Act*, Iſa. 28. 21. And it would fare hard enough with *the beſt of us*, ſhould he (with *Strictneſs* and *Rigour*) *mark Iniquity*; ſhould he *lay judgment to the line, and righteouſneſs to the plummet*, as the Expreſſions are, *Pſal.* 130. 3. *Iſa.* 28. 17.

3. *Our Endeavours for the Reformation of Others, muſt be accompanied with, and encouraged by the Hope of Deſired Succeſs*; That we ſhall *deliver our own Souls*, (Ezek. 14. 14.) that we ſhall *ſave our Brother's Soul from Death*, (Jam. 5. 20.) and that we ſhall contribute to the *turning away of Wrath* from a ſinful Land, and to the *lengthening out the*

Publick Tranquility. If we have *no Hope* of doing any Good, we ſhall have *no Heart* to do any, nor ſo much as *to attempt* the doing it. It was *Hope* encouraged the *Ninevites* to *repent* and *reform*, when they had heard the *dreadful Doom* of utter Deſtruction denounced againſt them by the Prophet *Jonah*, *Jon.* 3. 4, 9. And, bleſſed be God, *our Caſe*, though *ſad*, is not ſo *deſperate* as not to leave us any *encouraging Grounds of Hope.* The *Experience* we have had of the *Divine Favour*, in delivering us from the *intolerable Miſeries* of *Popery* and *Slavery* by a *juſt War*, and from the *remaining Miſeries* of War by an *happy Peace*; the *Preſervation* of the King's Life in ſo many *Dangers* as he hath been expoſed to, both at *Home* and *Abroad*; His *Majeſty's Forwardneſs* to countenance the *Work of Reformation* by his *Speeches* to the *Parliament*, *Proclamation* to all his *Subjects*, and by being *himſelf* a *Pattern* of what he *recommends*; together with the *like Forwardneſs* in the *High Court of Parliament*, and the moſt eminently *dignified* and *diſtinguiſhed* Perſons both in *Church* and *State*;

State; the *Readineſs* of many, both in *City* and *Country*, to join in this *bleſſed Work*; and the *viſible Succeſs* of their *honeſt* and *pious Endeavours*. Theſe, ſure, give us ſome *Ground of Hope*, and *Encouragement to expect*, that our Labour in *this matter*, ſhall not be *in vain*: But that if we *heartily* ſet to the Work, God will work *with* us, and *for* us, and *his Bleſſings* will crown our Endeavours with *greater Succeſs* than we have *yet ſeen*, or even durſt *hope for*.

4. *With a due Senſe of the great Honour God puts upon us, in making uſe of us as Inſtruments for the ſaving of Others from Sin and Ruine.* We may well ſay with Admiration, *Lord! what is man*, that thou ſhouldſt cloath him with *ſuch Honour*! The Apoſtle St. *Paul* thought it worthy of his utmoſt *Acknowledgements*, that God ſhould ſo highly honour him, as to *account him faithful, and put him into the Miniſtery*, 1 Tim. 1. 12. In a *proportionable meaſure* every one is *greatly honoured of God* that is made an Inſtrument to convert an *erring Brother*, and by *turning a Sinner from the error of his way, to ſave a*

Soul from Death, and hide a multitude of Sins, Jam. 5. 20. *'Tis the Joy of Angels to behold the Converſion of Sinners*, (Luke 15. 10.) it muſt needs then be the *Glory of Mortals* to be *inſtrumental*, in it. This was the *great Errand* the Son of God came down *from Heaven* upon; and to be *the Saviour*, is one of his *moſt glorious Titles:* What muſt it be then for *us* to be ſubſervient to *him* in this *great Work*, and to be *conformed to him*, in ſaving our ſelves and others? *Such Honour have all his Saints!* even they who were once themſelves *notorious Sinners*, and ſtood in as much need of *Saving Mercy* as any the vileſt of the Sons of Men.

5. *With a Prudent and Pious Fear, leſt the Work miſcarry in our hands, by our bad Management; leſt we harden thoſe we deſign to ſoften, and ruine thoſe we endeavour to ſave.* They that take upon them the Work of *Reforming others* had need *look well to themſelves*; ſuch are *as a City ſet on a Hill, which cannot be hid*, Matth. 5. 14. They that *envy* or *hate* our Endeavours for Reformation, will be

be forward to *ſpy out* and *aggravate* our Miſcarriages: And though, when all's done, it cannot be expected we ſhould be *Angels*, yet it becomes us to labour to be of *the beſt of Men*; that none may juſtly taunt us with that Proverb, *Phyſician, heal thy ſelf*, Luke 4. 23. *Meekneſs*, *Prudence*, *Watchfulneſs*, *Zeal*, *Self-denial*, *Brotherly-love*, muſt *ſhine brightly* in the *whole courſe* of our Behaviour, and *eſpecially* in our Endeavours to *convince* and *reclaim* others.

6. *With needful Severity, where milder Methods would not be likely to ſucceed. Immedicabile vulnus enſe recidendum eſt, ne pars ſincera trahatur.* Some Sinners are ſuch *Sons of Belial, that, like thorns, they cannot be taken with hands; but the man that ſhall touch them, muſt be fenced with iron, and the ſtaff of a ſpear*, 2 Sam. 23. 6, 7. With *theſe* there is *no dallying*. *God* and the *Magiſtrate* have put it into our Power to *puniſh them*; and we draw *the Guilt of their Blood*, and *the Hurt they may do, by their infectious Example*, to the Souls of others, upon our own Heads, if, by a *fooliſh Pity*, we

be tender of their *Credit*, *Profit*, or *Eaſe*, to the *hardening* them in their Sins, and giving them the Advantage of *recommending Vice* to others by their own Impunity.

Where *Warnings* and *Reproofs* ſignifie nothing, the *Smart of Puniſhment may awaken*, or at leaſt *reſtrain*. What tho' ſuch, for the preſent, count us their *Enemies*, perhaps they will not do ſo *always*. However, 'tis better bearing *the Efforts of their Anger* than *the Burthen of their Guilt*.

7. *With Zeal.* A *cold Reproof* is a *palliating*, and in a ſort a *praiſing* of Sin. Thus *Eli reproved* his Sons; but becauſe he did it *coldly*, and *reſtrained them not*, *God chargeth the Guilt*, and *exacteth the Puniſhment* of their *Impieties* on his *Perſon* and *whole Poſterity*, *vide* 1 Sam. 3. 11, 12, 13, 14.

True Zeal will make us *ſpeedy* in our Endeavours to reclaim Sinners, leſt the *proper* Seaſon for it be loſt; *active* and *induſtrious*, both to *diſcover* Sin, and bring the Sinner to *juſt Shame* and *Puniſhment*; that our *Sloth* occaſion not the

the *Growth of Impiety*, and the Spreading of *this Fire*, till all be devoured by it. And *above all*, we muſt ſee that our Zeal be not of an *earthly*, much leſs an *helliſh Original*; that it be not owing either to our *Self-love*, or our *Envy* to, or *Hatred* of our Brethren: But that it be wholly of a *Divine* and *Heavenly Extract*, altogether *animated* by a *Principle* of *Love* to God, and to the Souls of Men; and then we may well *be clad with Zeal as a Cloak*, and *to be eaten up by it*, (Iſa. 59. 17. Joh. 2. 17.) will be our *Commendation* at preſent, and the Occaſion of our receiving *a full Reward* at laſt.

8. And, Laſtly, *with due Caution as to our ſelves*. We are to love our Neighbour *as our ſelves*, and therefore *our ſelves* in the *firſt place*; *eſpecially* this is to be obſerved in Matters of a *ſpiritual nature*, and wherein the *Health* and *Happineſs* of our Souls is concerned. And 'tis this which, as I take it, we are *here* taught: When the Apoſtle had been giving Rules for our Behaviour towards *others*, in order to their Recovery

very and Reformation, he ſubjoins, *hating even the garment ſpotted by the fleſh.*

Here then, we muſt with a careful Eye look to theſe thimgs.

1. *Leſt we render our ſelves guilty, by our Endeavours to reform others, for want of due regard to our Principles from which, our Ends for which, and the Means by which we act in ſo good a Work.* God requires of us, not only *that what we do be good*, but *that we do it well:* Elſe *Prayer* may become *Sin*, *Sacrifice* an *Abomination*, and the *Execution of Juſtice Murther*; as it was in *Jehu*'s Caſe, Hoſ. 1. 4. See then that the Love of God and Chriſt, and Souls, *conſtrain us*; that we have no *Squint-regards* to our own *Credit*, or *Secular Advantage*, much leſs that we be not puffed up with the *haughty Pride* of *thinking more highly of our ſelves than is meet to think*; that our *Looks* and *Geſture* do not ſay, what we would be aſhamed our *Tongue* and *Lips* ſhould, *Stand off, I am holier than thou*, Iſa. 65. 5. But let our *Hearts* and

and *Conſciences* bear us witneſs, that we *ſincerely* aim at *the Glory of God, the Salvation of Men, the Good of the preſent Age and Poſterity*, and *the keeping our ſelves from partaking of the Sins of the Times and Places where we live, that ſo we may ſhun the Puniſhment due to them.* And farther, we muſt ſee that *all the Means* we uſe to *ſo good Ends* be *juſt* and *allowable. Id ſolum poſſumus, quod jure poſſumus: God needeth not my lie to his glory*, (Rom. 3. 7, 8.) nor muſt I go *out of my place*, tho' it were to ſtay *his Ark* when ready to fall, (2 *Sam.* 6. 6, 7, 8.) Bleſſed be God, we want not *warrantable Means* enough, to promote the *good Ends* of Reformation, that we ſhould need to betake our ſelves to *unlawful* or *doubtful* ones: Nor do I in the leaſt ſuſpect *your combining into Societies*, or *the Magiſtrates concealing the Names of Informers* (eſpecially in ſome Caſes) *for ſuch.* They have both of them been ſo *fully vindicated* by abler hands, that I need ſay nothing of them here.

2. *We*

2. *We ought to take heed, leſt the frequent converſing with groſs and notorious Sinners (as we think, with a Deſign to reform them) do gradually and inſenſibly abate our Abhorrence of Sin, and infect us with its Contagion; that we partake not of other Mens Sins, nor become like thoſe whoſe Reformation and Amendment we profeſs to deſire and endeav our.* It is ſometimes ſeen that a Phyſician *catcheth* the Diſeaſe he was ſent for to *cure*. If we *chooſe* bad Men for our Companions, it is a ſign we *are ſuch* our ſelves; and if we are *caſt into* their Company, be the Occaſion what it will, we are to look upon it as *an Hour of Temptation*, and accordingly to *double our Watch*, by awakening the *Fear of God* and the *Hatred of Sin* in our Souls. It is a dreadful thing to behold Sin with an *unconcerned Indifferency of Spirit*, or to hear the Name of God blaſphemed, without being moved with *inward Horror and Remorſe*. We ought to enter *a ſolemn Proteſt*, in the *Secret* of our Souls, againſt all that Impiety we

are

are *conſtrained* to be Witneſſes to; yea, and to make our *inward Diſpleaſure* againſt it viſible and evident by all *proper* and *prudent Methods.* Thus we read, *Juſt Lot vexed his righteous ſoul from day to day, in ſeeing and hearing the ungodly deeds of the impure Sodomites,* 2 Pet. 2. 8. We muſt keep, as far as we can, from the *contagious Breath* of *impudent Sinners.* And even while *Their* and the *Common Good* obligeth us to converſe with them, *our own* muſt engage us to be *upon our Guard.* We muſt *have no fellowſhip with thoſe unfruitful works of darkneſs which we are called to reprove and ſuppreſs,* Eph. 5. 11. Our *corrupt Natures* are like *Tinder,* apt to *catch Fire* at every *Spark*; and therefore, tho' we may be *jealous over others with a godly jealouſie,* (2 Cor. 11. 2.) yet it muſt be ſo, as ever *in the firſt place* to maintain the ſame *Jealouſie* over *our ſelves.* He forfeits his *Innocency* and his *Peace* (two of the moſt *precious Jewels* in the World) that *grows bold with Temptation.* Let us therefore *be ſober* and *vigilant,* becauſe our Adverſary

ſary the Devil goeth about as a roaring Lion, *ſeeking whom he may devour*, 1 Pet. 5. 8. The *better* we *are*, or *ſeem to be*, and the *more excellent* and *uſeful* the *Work* we are engaged in is, the *greater* is *Satan's Malice* againſt us; and therefore *the more ſtrict* ſhould be *our Care* and *Vigilance* over our ſelves.

III. I ſhould now proceed to the Third General Inquiry, the Import whereof is, to ſet before you *the Obligations we lie under to endeavour the Reformation of others, and to ſave them with Fear, pulling them out of the Fire:* But the *Matter treated of* under the *former Inquiries*, hath ſo *multiplied* and *lengthened* on my hands, that inſtead of *a more diſtinct Conſideration of the ſeveral Obligations* that lie upon us to *ſo important a Duty*; I muſt content my ſelf with a *brief Repreſentation* of them, in the way of *an Hortatory Addreſs to the Worthy Gentlemen of the Society for Reformation of Manners in this Palce*; which I think is *all the Application* that either the *Subject* requires, or the *Time* will admit.

Let

Let me therefore (*Much Honoured and Dearly Beloved*) in the Name of my great Lord and Maſter, *beſeech* and *exhort you*, as you have *put your Hand to this Plough*, ſo not to entertain the leaſt Thought of *looking back*, Luke 9. 62. Let *no Diſcouragements* affright you from continuing with *unwearied Diligence* in the Proſecution of your Endeavours, for the *effectual Suppreſſing* of all *Vice*, *Immorality*, and *Profaneneſs* amongſt us.

Error and *Impiety* have their *Patrons* and *Advocates* every where, and they are *bold*, *reſtleſs*, and *importunate*; be not you *aſhamed* or *affraid* to plead the Cauſe of *Truth* and *Holineſs*, which is *evidently*, and *beyond Diſpute*, *the Cauſe of God*. 'Tis God himſelf who *requires* and *expects* this at your hands; the God who *made you* and *redeemed you*, the God whom you *profeſs* to love and ſerve, the God who hath *prepared* a Crown of *Glory* and bleſſed *Immortality* for all them who are *Faithful to his Intereſts*, here on Earth, and who is *able* to puniſh with *inconceivable*, *endleſs Torments* of Body and Soul, all thoſe

thoſe who *falſly betray their Truſt*, and hath *threatened* ſo to do.

Your *Profeſſion of Chriſtianity* obligeth you to *Zeal* and *Diligence* in this Work. Chriſtianity is *a Doctrine of Love*; and ſurely *this Love* ought not to be *confined* to the *Bodies* of Men, but to be *firſt* and *principally* extended to their *Souls*. *If he that hath this World's Good, and ſeeth his Brother have need, and ſhutteth up his Bowels of Compaſſion from him*, do thereby evidence himſelf *utterly devoid of the Grace of Charity*, as the Apoſtle aſſures us, (1 *John* 3. 17.) What *Charity*, what *Love to God or Man* can he be thought to have, that ſeeth his Brother *running poſt* in the *direct Road* to *Hell*, and will do nothing to *ſtop* or *turn* him? Do I need to ſet before you the *Excellency* of your Work? To *oppoſe* the *Kingdom of Satan*, and *the Powers of Darkneſs*; To *Advance* the *Kingdom* and *Intereſt* of *God*, and *our Lord Jeſus Chriſt*; to *Reſcue* poor Souls from *Temporal* and *Eternal Deſtruction*; to *Promote* the *Security*, *Peace*, and *Happineſs* of your *Native Country*: *All this*, *the Work you*

are

are engaged in, hath a viſible Relation and hopeful Tendency to.

Conſider farther, whoſe *Character* it was, that *he went about doing good*, Acts 10. 38. and how much it is your *Concern*, and will be your *Credit*, to be *Followers of him.* Remember alſo, that it is too late *after Vows, to make enquiry*, Prov. 20. 25. You are the devoted Servants of God-Redeemer by the Bonds of your *Holy Baptiſm*, in which you were *liſted* as *Chriſt's Soldiers*, and engaged in a *perpetual War* againſt *Satan*, your own *Fleſh*, and this preſent evil *World. Chriſt came into the world, to deſtroy the works of the devil*, 1 John 3. 8. and we are under *all imaginable Obligations* to be *ſubſervient unto him* in that *great Deſign* of his.

Beſides, I might urge upon you *the heavy Judgments* growing *Senſuality* and *Profaneneſs* have brought upon *other Countries* and *our own*; the *wonderful Patience* God hath long exerciſed *towards* us; and the *innumerable Beneſits* and *Favours* he hath conferred *upon us:* So that if we now neglect a *real* and *hearty Reformation*, and *Return to God*,

we ſhew our ſelves the moſt *ſtupid* and *ungrateful Creatures* upon Earth.

If the *preſent Conjuncture* ſeem not to us a *fit* and *favourable one*, to *undertake* and *go through* with *ſuch a Work*, when do we hope there may *ſuch a one* ariſe? Are we ever like to have *a Prince* that will *more favour Reformation*? Do we ever expect *better Laws* to *enable us* for it? Can we hope (till the Work it ſelf have made ſome *conſiderable Progreſs*) to find the *Nation* in a *greater readineſs* to *embrace* and *comply with it*? So that this ſeems to be the very *critical Minute* for *England*'s *Reformation*; and we have Reaſon to *conclude*, (or at leaſt ſtrongly to *conjecture*,) that it muſt be *now or never*. Let it be farther thought on, that the *Deſires* and *Expectations* of all *good Men*, at *Home* and *Abroad*, are, that *now ſomething ſhould be made of ſo good a Work*. Our poor *Brethren* of *France*, under all the *Miſeries* and *Hardſhips* they endure, comfort themſelves, that the *Reformation* and *Settlement* of the *reſt of the Proteſtant Churches*, and of *Us* in ſpecial, may be the *Preſage*

and

and *Beginning* of *Peace*, *Reſt*, and *Reſtauration* unto *them:* And this hath been, for many Years, the *Prayer*, *Hope*, and *Endeavour* of the *wiſeſt* and *beſt* among our ſelves.

We have, alas! *too long* been *divided* in *Communion* and *Affection*, and have thereby made our ſelves the *Sport* of our *Enemies*, and the *Pity* of our *Friends*; and all Endeavours *hitherto* uſed, for the healing of our Breaches, have been *fruitleſs* and *ineffectual*: But I verily perſuade my ſelf, that if *the Work of Reformation of Manners* were but once brought to a *conſiderable pitch of Perfection*, *the other* would, as it were, *fall in of courſe:* For, *whence come wars and fightings among us*, (even *Eccleſiaſtical Wars*, for I think it's too great a *Solæciſm* to call them *Religious ones*,) *come they not hence*, *even of our Luſts that war in our Members*, Jam. 4. 1.

Again, What could more contribute to our *Comfort in Death*, and *Confidence at Judgment*, than our *Faithfulneſs to God*, *and his Intereſt* here in this World? When our Conſciences ſhould bear us

witneſs, that we have ſhunned no *Labour*, *Coſt*, *Shame*, or *Suffering*, ſo we might promote *Righteouſneſs*, *Godlineſs*, and *Sobriety*, in the Places where we lived.

And to Conclude: Of how great Advantage might our *Faithfulneſs* and *Succeſs* be, not only to the *preſent Age*, but to *Poſterity* alſo? How might an *happy Contagion* ſpread it ſelf over *this* and *neighbouring Kingdoms*? *Vice* has been propagated by *Example*; Who knows but (by the concurrent Bleſſing of Heaven) *Vertue* and *Piety* may be ſo too? And then how great Cauſe would *Poſterity* have to *riſe up*, and *call us Bleſſed*.

I cloſe all with the Apoſtle's Exhortation, 1 *Cor.* 15. 58. *Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye ſtedfaſt, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, foraſmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.*

FINIS.

POSTSCRIPT.

WHereas I have been given to underſtand, that thoſe Words, *Page* 12. *I know this Matter hath been carried too far*, &c. were taken *by ſome*, in the Hearing, for a *deſigned Reflection* on the Church of *England*; and 'tis poſſible this Sermon may fall into the Hands of Perſons not *more knowing*, nor leſs *prejudicate*, than the *aforeſaid Objectors*: I thought meet here to declare, (what I ſuppoſe every *intelligent* and *candid* Reader will concurr with me in,) That in what is there ſaid, I had *no Thoughts* of the *Eſtabliſhed Church*, nor of *any other* Body or Society of Proteſtants, of *whatever Denomination*; but *thoſe Words* did entirely refer to *the Bigots* of *all Parties*, who *place Religion* in things very *accidental*, if not wholly *extrinſick* to it; and *value themſelves* more upon thoſe things which *divide* and *diſtinguiſh* them from *other Chriſtians*, than upon thoſe *much weightier* and *more important ones*, wherein the *whole Body* of Chriſt's Catholick Church are *agreed*.

agreed. In a word, that Paſſage is *wholly levelled* againſt an *unwarrantable*, *falſe*, *furious Zeal* for *doubtful*, or *little things*, to the *Neglect* and *Detriment* of the *greater* and *weightier* Matters of the Law and Goſpel; *Judgment*, *Mercy*, and *Faith*: (Matth. 23. 23.) Whether the *Object* of *ſuch Zeal* be *Presbytery* and (Doctrinal) *Calviniſm*, or *Epiſcopacy* and *Arminianiſm*, or *Anarchy* and *Antinomianiſm*. If Men of *this Temper* be capable of any Cure, (as I hope ſome may,) I would commend to their *ſerious Reading*, Judge *Hales's Three Short Tracts of Religion, and the Appendages to it*; Biſhop *Wilkin's Two Sermons* on *Rom.* 4. 17, 18. Mr. *Chandler's Effort againſt Bigotry*, on the ſame Text; and Mr. *Corbet's Kingdom of God among Men.*

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Reader, I have no farther Trouble to give thee, but to conclude with that Apoſtolical Benediction, in which thou may'ſt read (if I know any thing of it) my *very Heart*; 2 Theſſ. 3. 16. *Now the Lord of Peace himſelf give you Peace always, by all means. The Lord be with you all. Amen.*